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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. GRASSLEY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, Creator of all things, make haste to minister to our needs. Lead us from self-inflicted injuries as You seek to use our lawmakers for Your glory. In all of their labors, guard and guide our Senators until Your will is done on Earth even as it is done in Heaven. May Your peace reign in their hearts, now and always, as they become more aware of the inexhaustible riches of Your mercies.

We pray in Your great Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. BOOZMAN). The majority leader is recognized.

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR—S. 1, S. 21, AND S. 24

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I understand there are three bills at the desk due for a second reading en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bills by title for the second time.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1) to make improvements to certain defense and security assistance provisions and to authorize the appropriation of

funds to Israel, to reauthorize the United States-Jordan Defense Cooperation Act of 2015, and to halt the wholesale slaughter of the Syrian people, and for other purposes.

A bill (S. 21) making continuing appropriations for Coast Guard pay in the event an appropriations act expires prior to the enactment of a new appropriations act.

A bill (S. 24) to provide for the compensation of Federal and other government employees affected by lapses in appropriations.

Mr. McCONNELL. In order to place the bills on the calendar under the provisions of rule XIV, I object to further proceedings en bloc.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Objection having been heard, the bills will be placed on the calendar.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, later today, I will join President Trump, the Democratic leader, the new Speaker of the House, and our congressional colleagues down at the White House.

The meeting represents the latest in the President's ongoing efforts to persuade Democrats that appropriate funding for border security is a better outcome than persisting in this partial government shutdown. I hope that this time around my friends across the aisle will come prepared to engage much more seriously on the issue at hand.

We may have entered a new Congress since our last meeting, but the basic steps that are needed to end this unfortunate standoff really haven't changed at all. We are in the same place. As I have said on several occasions and as the administration has affirmed, any viable compromise will need to carry the endorsement of the President before it receives a vote in either House of Congress. Under these conditions, the package presented by the House's new Democratic leaders yesterday can only be seen as a time-wasting act of political posturing. It does not carry the support of the President—in fact, the administration indicated yesterday

that the President would actually veto it—and it cannot earn the support of 60 of my colleagues over here in the Senate.

My friends across the aisle understand the ground rules perfectly well. They know that a solution will need to be palatable to House Democrats and Senate Republicans alike. They know that making laws takes a Presidential signature. We all learned that in grade school. In fact, the Democratic leader himself insisted “the President must publicly support and say he will sign an agreement before it gets a vote in either Chamber.” That is the Democratic leader who said that.

Everyone understands what we need to move forward and successfully make policy instead of simply staging political theater. Everyone should understand just how urgently the situation on our Nation's border demands our attention—the situation that has been accurately described by the Commissioner of the CBP—the Border Patrol—as a “border security and humanitarian crisis.” This shouldn't be taken lightly. It should not be viewed as an opportunity for the new House Democratic majority to prioritize political performance as an art form ahead of the public interest.

I urge our Democratic colleagues to approach our meeting today with a willingness to join the administration and the men and women of Customs and Border Protection to work to protect our border and bring this partial shutdown to an end.

THE MIDDLE EAST

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, while these discussions continue, the Senate will also be taking up other important work.

Yesterday, the senior Senator from Florida introduced a package of four bills that pertain to U.S. policy in the Middle East. I am a proud cosponsor of

● This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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